



Local

## Montgomery council approves White Flint redevelopment

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March 24, 2010



The redevelopment project around the White Flint Metro station is set to cost \$895 million. (Andrew Harnik/Examiner)

The Montgomery County Council voted unanimously to adopt an ambitious plan to change the area around the White Flint Metro station from strip malls, gas stations and car dealerships into a neighborhood of tightly packed high-rise condos, apartments, shops and restaurants.

The \$895 million project is the county's first shot at redeveloping sprawling suburbs to focus on high-density neighborhoods where residents can leave their cars behind and stroll city centers for work and play. Similar plans are being considered in Tysons Corner and Potomac Yard in Alexandria.

"This is an award-winning plan," Council President Nancy Floreen, D-at large, said ahead of Tuesday's vote. "It does indeed set a new bar for the county."

### White Flint project

» About 430 acres around White Flint station

» \$895 million price tag

¥ \$370 million from special bond-and-tax funds levied on area residents

¥ \$300 million from state and/or county taxpayers

¥ \$225 million from developers

» Up to \$7 billion in revenue for the county over next three decades

City planners say that aging baby boomers and their children are no longer interested in long commutes to big houses among green fields and instead want urbanized living. Montgomery County is in the best possible shape to exploit this "new urbanism," because the county has 12 Metro stops on the Red Line.

The White Flint vote represents the first major approach to the new urbanism. County officials changed their zoning law to create a special residential-commercial label for the project and are hoping to keep it for future plans.

"It is a huge deal for our community," said Councilman Roger Berliner, D-Potomac/Bethesda, who pushed the plan through three years of sometimes contentious argument.

Planning Board Chairman Royce Hanson said Tuesday's vote changes "the planning paradigm in the county ... and making a major contribution to the future of the county."

Tuesday's vote green lights the project, but county officials still must figure out how to pay for it. They are weighing a plan that would create a special tax district in the area and take in another \$300 million from the state's or county's coffers. Developers would pay for up to 25 percent of the plan.

White Flint is the first of several major development projects that the council will take up this year. County leaders also are deliberating the base realignment at Bethesda National Naval Medical Center, the Purple Line light rail and the massive "Science City" project in the Gaithersburg-Rockville-North Potomac area.

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